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To My Cigarette

By

Maude Le Page

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by
Maude Le Page

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Introductory Truths

As the infantile me lay in its soft cradle, sucking its little pink toes, a mother probably stood over it dreaming lavender dreams of a future—a future of rose leaves and honey.

Then something happened. A storm perhaps, with black clouds and much thunder. The lightning flashed! The mother searched for her coddled babe, and the light revealed what was: a small, frail, tired body, and a delicatessen store, and customers—always customers.

The lavender dream was smeared with mud. Perhaps there were tears then. I have forgotten. But it has come to pass that I have learned much, and among my learnings this fact glistens: mud is good, for out of it grows beautiful flowers and songs. Such flowers as could not take root in silver sands; such songs as could not be sung on paths of rose leaves with golden drips of honey.

I have seen it. There are feet which tread the silver sands. What do they feel? What do they know of sensation?

I would thank Thee today, Lord, for the storm with black clouds and much thunder. Let me lie down in the mud. Let me suffer that I may know the joy of a cigarette and a song.

They do not know these things. They who tread the silver sands. They have never experienced

> "The tear that enjoyment may gild with a smile,
> "And the smile that compassion can turn to a tear!"

They only know life is very sweet, and when they die they are going to heaven.

They have never seen glorious pictures floating through space on clouds of smoke from their cigarette. They have never lain awake all through God's night listening to proud and lovely songs sung by their souls.

The staring, glaring daylight overpowers me. I am a whining pigmy when the sun casts grotesque shadows. I crawl on the pavement and dare not raise my eyes. I am a coward and a knave. I am the conventional cad. I lie low and wait, and then comes the night.

Behold, a kind gray calm has enfolded my small sphere. A mighty stillness fills the corners. I am alone with God. It is then the soul of me steps forth and sings into my ears. I listen and lie happy.

The light breaks, the day rushes in, the wage earning begins. I stand behind the counter—*smiling sweetly.*

Customers arrive gnashing their teeth and stamping their cloven hoofs.

More customers arrive! They talk to me of preserving the fruits, bluing the clothes, locating the bedbug. They talk, and ever of things external. They look into my eye and do not even guess that I am a poet.

They are fools! I will write that about them in my verses. That is the thing I like to write best. That they are fools. That is always consoling.

Had the gods willed it that I be born a man-child, all would have gone well with me, for then would the infant with the soft pink toes have trodden the path of the hobo.

What a joyous life it could have been. Every star in the firmament would have been familiar with the sight of me.

To live with the stars and the grass and the evening breezes; to wear few clothes with nothing of style in their cut; to eat from my hands leaves which grow by the wayside, eat irregularly and little; to let the

bare feet of me caress the earth and the weeds; to know the feeling of dirt, much dirt, on my naked body; to lay me down to sleep with the flowers, and the tired little bugs, and the open night; to know that the sky is mine, and the earth is mine, and the air is mine; never to weary the small gray brain of me with calculations and deductions—such is the path open to every man-child born. The path of the unhampered hobo.

With the woman it is different. Quite different. I am a woman and thereby have no choice. I must needs be respectable. Such is the law. And I am a woman, and obey both the spirit of the law and the letter of the law.

My respectability is of such weight that it has bowed and bent me; has wrinkled my young hands, and calloused my feet, and the stars do not know me.

Respectability should never be demanded of a poet. It is murder. The soul of a poet recognizes no law, no order, no hangman's noose, nor idle tongue of the bystander.

Keep your poluted hands off of it a minute and watch it soar. Up, up, up! See, it floats like a silver feather from the breast of a dove, and only the breath of the morning dare approach it. Now it touches lightly the rim of the earth, and balances unafraid. Now it dips into the depths, and rises like a new-born daisy. It breathes, it lives and breathes, and pleads with the many to hearken to the glorious tales it would tell.

It is frail with the frailness of a sunbeam. It is strong with the strength of a volcano. It runs, it runs with wind-like swiftness over untrodden paths, and gathers a harvest of unwonted worth.

See, now it is coming toward us. Stand back, stand back! I cry. Keep your desecrated fingers off its throat. Blind your worthless eyes if they cannot endure the radiant circle. Pluck out your filthy tongue

if it would pronounce the word which kills. Deafen the small ears of you if they are offended by the sound of truth and music.

Do as ye will, ye of the silver sands and cloven hoofs, but stand back, stand back, I cry, and allow the soul of the poet to soar.

Poor, poor, fettered little poets! It was ever the same. They may sing of sylphs, and sprites, and houris, but they themselves are obliged to be human. They may sing, but must descend. The fantastic calls, the fact commands.

Robert Burns tilled the soil. The beautiful Shelley fought and wept. Edgar Allen Poe was a drunkard. I have thought of this, but have not the courage. It takes much courage to do the unexpected.

To be a poet and nothing else would be enough. To be a poet and a day laborer—ah, that is not enough. Something dies. The heart perhaps. It is not the soul, for the soul struggles on and sings.

The brain of me is doomed, damned and dazed. It beholds the action of the populace, but cannot comprehend.

They do not care. They do not see. They believe me to be one of them. I assist them in their delusion by standing behind the counter day after day—*smiling sweetly.*

I have schooled myself in the art of conversation until I can talk almost intelligently of their preserves, their husbands, and their operations. They frequently call me a "dear little thing." This, please God, I am not.

The finest songs of my soul are lost, for they are sung in the stilly night, and heard only by the angels and me.

Those which alighted on paper have somehow been saved, and today, by the order of a small hushed voice, I set out in search of them. They peered at me from alien shores. One called from the pantry shelf, one

from under a scarf on the mantlepiece, several from the small drawer where I keep my cigarettes, one cried out from the waste paper basket, and so on and so on.

And here they lie before me in a tousled heap. My mind is talking in a low tone about publishers. I listen. It sounds much like a political debate. There are many arguments pro and con. I am swayed in one direction, then another. I think a long time, a very long time. I arrive at a decision, and now I write my proclamation, and sign my name to it. Hark!

I, Maude Le Page, party of the first part, declare that the publishers, whom-so-ever, parties of the second part, shall have their opportunity.

The moist songs of my soul shall be launched forth onto the nervous sea and the bellowing earth. To live if they are strong enough; to die if they are weak enough.

I would that the unsuspicious might run and read.

I see it all before me like a huge painting in oil. A masterpiece of many figures.

Tramp, tramp, tramp! There they parade, they of the silver sands and cloven hoofs, gnashing their teeth and stamping till the dust flies.

A masterpiece, I vow. For through the dim recesses of my lavender imagination I discern a background—a most befitting background, the lone figure of little me—*smiling sweetly.*

MAUDE LE PAGE.

To My Cigarette

Many friends I may forget,
Many ties may sever,
But sweet little cigarette,
I'll forsake you never.
To my lips,
Press your tips,
Then I'll forsake you never.

When I hold you, Cigarette,
Like a lighted daisy,
Worldly cares I quite forget,
Growing very lazy.
Burning seer,
You are near,
And men and gods are hazy.

Ah, the years I strove to be
Friend to other ladies.
Cruel demands they made of me.
Let them go to Hades!
Happy day!
Away, away!
With Clemantines and Madies.

You're my queen upon a throne,
I'm thy humble peasant,
You deceive me—be it known,
But your tales are pleasant.
Just deceive,
I'll believe,
For all your tales are pleasant.

Lovely dreams I've dreamed unspoke,
Customs sent a-twirling,
As I've watched your downy smoke
Through the air go whirling.
Just to you,
I'll be true,
My flag of hope unfurling.

People love to misconstrue,
Fixing cold decisions,
So I give my love to you,
Heeding not derisions.
Ere they prey,
Let's away
To our land of visions.

Cigarette, you seem to know
Life is but a token
Of a promise, long ago,
Made by gods and broken.
All but smoke
Is a joke,
If truth were ever spoken.

My Prayer

Lord, give me strength to steal this day
The thing which I desire,
Then I'll accept your heaven's gate,
Or your devil's burning fire.

Yea, I'll approve what terms you make,
I'll bow me low and kneel,
If only you will grant the power,
The power and strength to steal.

I will not steal kings' rubies rare,
Nor merchants' bags of gold;
I will not steal my neighbor's man,
For men so soon grow cold.

I will not rob your churches, That's
Another man's affair.
I knew a priest one time, but pshaw!
That neither here nor there.

I will not be a petty thief
To shame you, for men tell
Of petty thieves—they're made amiss,
Their maker built not well.

But give me courage and strength to steal,
This blessing on me shower.
Come! grant a puny sinner's prayer,
'Twill help to prove your power.

I'll only steal one summer's day,
One little perfect day,
To live and love and laugh and be,
And fling the mask away.

One day beneath the open sky,
Where neither friend nor foe,
With fishy eye and lying tongue,
Shall voice his yes or no.

I'm tired, God, of man's harangue,
I fain would hide away.
I've grown so weary from the chase,
I've knelt me down to pray.

Oh, God Almighty, if Almighty,
What's this game you play,
Of making men and damning souls
And leading babes astray?

Of cursing maids before they're born,
And building men awry,
Of making hearts, and breaking hearts—
Does this amuse on high?

Do all the angels hover near
The throne at trumpet's call,
And watch us prance, and watch us dance,
And giggle when we fall?

I cannot comprehend Thy law,
I've tried and tried and tried.
But this I know—I'm drowning as
I'm carried with the tide.

When in your hand you held my clay,
You must have seen it lacked.
Still in these nostrils you blew life—
A most unworthy act.

Your subjects are a faithful crew,
They toil and never rest.
When I rebel they only chant,
"Our God above knows best."

So by Thy leave I'll stop and steal
One little perfect day,
To live and love and laugh and be,
And fling the mask away.

Then pitch me in my cold, dark grave,
Or swing me up on high,
Or toss me to the mouth of hell,
And never a sigh I'll sigh.

For I'll have had my hour of life,
Have warmed me in the sun.
Oh, God, release me just one day,
And then—Thy will be done.

Consolation

Don't be blue!
  Don't repine!
Smile a little,
  Fellow mine.

Take a hand in
  Wisdom's game,
Optimism
  Is it's name.

Smile a little,
  Look ahead!
Be consoled,
  You'll *soon* be dead!

I Sing The Delicatessen

A wee little being was landed
On a globe which goes whirling through space.
There various things were demanded
By a not over loveable race.

CHORUS.

Tra la la lee!
And tra la la lo!
I never sought admission,
And now my nature has to yield
To every fixed condition.

To me it seems terribly tragic
To work through the glorious day,
I'd rather take chances with magic,
And stop by the wayside to play.

CHORUS.

Tra la la lee!
And tra la la lo!
The knowing birds are chirking,
And God is feathering every one,
And nary a one is working.

But I am obliged to contribute,
The law is that every one sells,
But what shall I choose to distribute,
A ware or the wedding bells?

CHORUS.

Tra la la lee!
And tra la la lo!
I hear the bells a-swelling,
But that is not the merchandise
That I have fixed on selling.

Ah, keenly I know 'tis not tony,
My proud soul within must rebel,
That cabbages, buns and bologna
Are the goods I've elected to sell.

CHORUS.

Tra la la lee!
And tra la la lo!
God finds this angel clerking.
Ah, would I were a feathered fowl
And earned my plumage chirking!

At noon time the dames go a-shopping,
I bend myself double to please,
As back of the counter I'm hopping,
While slicing their bacon and cheese.

CHORUS.

Tra la la lee!
And tra la la lo!
My smile proclaims I like them,
While something within me is calling bad names,
And longing for courage to strike them.

My mother is sort of a writer,
With star-spangled views of her own.
I am not selling sausage to spite her,
But to make the flesh stick to the bone.

CHORUS.

Tra la la lee!
And tra la la lo!
The folk-song of our nation
Is "Work, ye dog, work, work, hi, ho!
"'Tis human's one salvation!"

And should I stop to calmly die,
They'd call that a sluggard's vacation.
So I must live and serve the dames,
For the sake of my clean reputation.

Oh, curses! and double damnation!!

A Promise

You blame me that I do not pray,
Ah, friend, provide my board and keep,
And I will pray the livelong day—
"Now I lay me down to sleep!"

Unwritten Law

What is right and what is wrong?
Let me sing a little song,
A heartfelt lay of wrong and right,
Pull the curtain, dim the light,
And I will softly sing tonight,
A song of wrong and right.

Let the evening breezes blow,
Play sweet music soft and low,
Give me ruby wine to drink,
Ruby wine to help me think,
And I will sing a song tonight—
A song of wrong and right.

Song.

A tiny snail,
With silky tail,
Lay on a mossy pillow.
It sunned itself,
Like woodland elf,
And basked beneath the willow.
It watched the trout
Splash in and out,
But made no spritely motion.
To try the game,
For worldly fame,
It hadn't any notion.

Chorus.

Then its hi! hi! hi!
Oh, why? why? why?
Should snails persist in being slow?
Is one thing man would like to know.
How the snail laughed then,
As he cried out, "Men!
"I'm all right in my place,
"Though I lose ev'ry race,
"Your logic is frightful,
"Your reasoning spiteful,
"For Nature ordained that I was to be
"The low little, slow little thing that you see."

Alaskan man,
With caravan
Of dogs hitched to his sledges,
Packed high his load,
Then took the road
Of snow and icy ledges.
They strained each nerve,
But could not swerve
That pack of grub and tenting.
The master swore,
His whip he bore,
And blows fell unrelenting.

CHORUS.

Then its hi! hi! hi!
Oh, why? why? why?
Can't active little sledge dogs run,
While harnessed to an hundred ton?
Then they cried at length,
"It's beyond our strength!
"We feel quite dejected,
"Too much is expected.
"Man figures, of course,
"We should pull like a horse,
"While Nature ordained that we were to be
"The light little cantering hounds that you see."

A shepherd lad,
In skirt of plaid,
With staff of crooked bramble,
Sat in the shade,
His fife he played,
And watched the lambkins gambol.
One little lamb,
(Perhaps a ram)
Showed wool as black as thunder.
Ah, goodness knows
Those dingy clothes
Would make a shepherd wonder.

CHORUS.

Then its hi! hi! hi!
Oh, why? why? why?
Should one be white and one be black?
The lambkin bowed his beaten back.
Then he cried in pain,
"Exercise your brain!
"I'm all right in my place,
"With my little black face.
"You're treating me awful,
"Your threats are unlawful,
"For Nature ordained that I was to be
"The poor cloudy little black sheep that you see."

What is right and what is wrong?
Have you hearkened to my song?
Convict, martyr, concubine,
Drink with me of ruby wine.
Let this thought consume you quite—
Existing truth is right!

Grand Opera

In Three Acts,

Entitlted,

EFFECT WITHOUT CAUSE.

Act I.

Scene—Park with numerous tables on the grass. Trees studded with electric lights. At table to *left* two damsels with glasses of soda-pop before them. At table to *right* two damsels with glasses of champagne, extra dry, before them. Curtain rises to lively music.

First Damsel to left (high soprano):

How lovely are the trees,
How sweet the evening breeze,
But tell me, will you please,
What do those women drink?

Second Damsel to left (also high soprano):

You should not question so,
That drink is something low,
I am not sure I know,
But 'tis champagne, I think.

Enter twelve soda-pop bottles with dimpled cheeks and golden curls.

Twelve Bottles, in chorus:

We are happy we are as we are, tra la!
We are pure in the sight of our neighbors.
    We would perish of shame,
    Were we known by the name
To which *certain* fluid e'er labors.

    Ah, perish of shame,
    Is putting it tame,
We hope this is clear to the neighbors.

(Exit.)

First Damsel to right (mezzo soprano):

How gorgeous is the night,
How beautiful the light,
But is my vision right?
    What do those women drink?

Second Damsel to right (also mezzo soprano):

To question seems the style,
You really make me smile,
It looks like something vile,
    'Tis soda-pop, I think.

Enter twelve champagne bottles with sparkling eyes and yellow silk tights.

Twelve Bottles in chorus:

We are happy we are as we are, ha ha!
We are sought by society's daughters.
We would die in a heap,
Were we branded so cheap,
As some of these pure soda waters.

'Neath cover we'd creep,
And die in a heap.
But here's to society's daughters! (Exit.)

Enter minister of the gospel.

Minister (to Damsels of the soda-pop):

No sin ye've sinned,
My blessing take,
Ye guiltless Molly-coddles.
But now away,
The moon has riz,

(They cross stage.)

Minister (aside):

Lord, how the fat one waddles.

First Damsel:

I wonder why he sends us hence,
And why he longer tarries.

Second Damsel:

I know not why, but on my word,
He's smiling at those fairies.

(Exit.)

Minister (to Damsels of the champagne):

In sin ye walk,
Whilst I am chaste,
Still will I do my duty.
(Picks up glass of wine.)
This stuff is death!
Go, sinners, go!

(They cross stage.)

Minister (aside):
Lord, what a thrilling beauty.

First Damsel:

I wonder why he sends us hence,
And why he longer lingers.

Second Damsel:

Ah, see, he sets the wine glass down,
Now licks his holy fingers.

(Exit.)

Stage grows suddenly dark. Mad thunder and lightning, wild music, loud, hysterical shriek. Lights on. Centre of stage stands a small, nude being from the Planet Lyra.

Small Being:

I dreamed in the night that I died,
And it seemed that I fell, fell, fell.
Went whizzing through space,
Till my feet struck a place,
Which we children of Lyra call Hell.

Minister:
Call Hell?

Small Being:
Call Hell!!

Minister:
Do tell!

Small Being (to Minister):

And now I shall study the land,
So tell me, kind sir, on the level,
Just what brings you here,
In raiment so queer,
Are you the notorious devil?

Minister:
What! me?

Small Being:
Yes, thee!

Minister:
Oh, gee!!

Small Being (to Minister):

Come, show me the ways of this place,
Methinks I will tarry a while,
'Twould be but polite
To a visiting sprite,
To escort him around in style.

Minister:

Go, go!

Small Being:

Not so!

Minister:

Oh, oh!!

Minister (baritone solo):

Oh, why this curse upon my head?
I've been so good, kind words I've said.
I've hymned and moaned and thanked and prayed—
(Lord, didst thou know of Mrs. Slade?)

Then punish me throughout my life,
But hear my prayer, *don't tell my wife.*

Voices From Above:

Oh, we are the angels of day and night,
We see all deeds and count them right.
So throw the dice,
And pay the price,
The broth were flat without the spice.

We act on this theory—what is life worth,
If man can't taste of heaven on earth?
Your saintly pose,
And musty clothes,
Are sacrifice enough, God knows!

Oh, we are the angels who got to heaven
By eating crumbs of bread unleaven.
So as we look
Upon the book,
We damn the dough, but spare the cook.

We fasten our lips and we play our cellos,
For, know ye, angels are good fellows.
They've gone the rounds,
And faced the hounds,
And sinned their sins on legal grounds.

Oh, we are the angels of common sense,
We spare the ladies, same as gents.
We dare not tell
All sights we spell,
Lest half our saints should land in hell.
So throw the dice,
And pay the price,
A paltry sum for precious vice!

Curtain.

Act II.

Scene—Delicatessen Store. Maid behind counter. Enter plump, middle-aged woman.

Maid (smiling sweetly):

What can I do for you, honey?

Woman:

Hush, is there any one near?

Maid:

What will you have for your money?

Woman:

Stepped in to gossip, my dear.

Yes, gossip, my dear, yes, gossip, my dear,
I've something to tell you most awfully queer,
Miss Porter is wearing a twelve-dollar hat,
Now what must a lady suspicion of that?

Chorus Off Stage:

Me-ow! me-ow! me-ow!!
To us it looks awfully funny,
She's working, we know, for three-fifty per week,
Now where does she get all her money?

Me-ow! me-ow! me-ow!!
We keep a close eye on the hats,
What time they go out, what time they get in,
For we are the virtuous cats!
Me-ow! me-ow! me-ow!! Fizzt!!

Maid (aside):

'Tis my business to be meek,
And the truth I dare not speak,
If I did I'd have to seek
A new position.
But I'd like to take a punch,
At that whole confounded bunch,
God has given me the hunch
That is my mission.

Enter Minister, followed closely by Small Being. (Duet.)

Minister:

Now this is what we call a store.

Small Being:

Never saw the like before.

Minister:

Here we purchase things to eat.

Small Being:

Why not pick them in the street?

Minister:

Here we buy such fruits as these.

Small Being:

Can't you pluck them from the trees?

Minister:

Nay, we buy them in a store.

Small Being:

Then what are the harvests for?

Minister:

Money is the voice that talks.

Small Being:

Do you find it on the walks?

Minister:

Tush! One has to work to live.

Small Being:

Then what does the Giver give?

Minister:

Nothing free, pray understand!

Small Being:

What, you pay for air and land?

Minister:

We may touch, but dare not take.

Small Being:

Am I dreaming or awake?

Small Being: (Plaintive solo.)

Is that the way?
Or does he play?
I cannot say.
    Such peculiar code is stranger far than fiction.
Oh, I'm sorry that I landed,
For I cannot understand it,
    It is all a jumble and a contradiction,
    Like a magic pudding made of truth and fiction.

Enter Seven Dames—

First Dame:

You must wash your clothes on Monday,
Or you'll hear from Mrs. Grundy.

Second Dame:

And on Tuesday iron them ever,
Or all social ties you sever.

Third Dame:

Every Wednesday ere its ending,
Finish all your family mending.

Fourth Dame:

And on Thursday do your calling,
Or your good name gets a mauling.

Fifth Dame:

Then its sweep your house on Friday,
Fuss and dust until its tidy.

Sixth Dame:

And on Saturday its taking
Out the pots and pans for baking.

Seventh Dame:

Then on Sunday, human creature,
Go to church and praise the preacher.

Seven Dames in Chorus:

This committee
Rules the city,
    Hip hooray!
Heads together,
Any weather,
    Night or day!
You will land yourselves in chaos,
If you dare to disobey us,
    For we are the leading ladies of the play.
'Twere not witty,
This committee,
    To rebuff.
Should you bawk,
We talk and talk,
    And say you're tough.
We have tongues like soldiers' sabres,
We're the neighbors, we're the neighbors,
    We're the neighbors that is all but that's enough.

Enter chorus of gray-bearded Philosophers.

Philosophers:

Ha ha, ha ha, ha ha!
He he, he he, he he!
Ho ho, ho ho, ho ho!
Tee he, tee he, tee he! (Exit.)

Small Being:

Is that the way?
Or do they play?
I cannot say.
    Some conductor put me off at the wrong station.
These are most peculiar folk,
Oh, I cannot see the joke,
    So please accept my humble resignation.
    And Lyra is my further destination!

CURTAIN.

Act III:

Scene—Planet Lyra. Trees, flowers, fruits, fountain of yellow wine, soft furred animals roaming at ease, transluscent birds singing softly, tall grasses waving, and small nude beings reclining everywhere.

Small Beings in Chorus:

Just to live, just to move, just to be,
Just to let our feet caress the dewy grasses.
Just to watch the fountain bubble,
Knowing naught of sin or trouble
Drinking health and wealth from tiny tulip glasses.

This is joy, this is strength, this is life.
This is freedom for we know no creeds or classes.
With the sun we romp all day, and
Night we ride the milky-way, and
Thus a merry, fairy life on Lyra passes.

Small Voice from Below:

I am sitting astride a rainbow,
A jolly good steed is he.
We have traveled the constellations,
Have floated o'er land and sea.

I have whispered my dashing rainbow,
To stop when his vision sights
A star in the heavens called Lyra,
The home of unfettered sprites.

Small Being returned from planet Earth suddenly appears.

Small Beings in Chorus:

Come give an explanation,
We have searched throughout creation,
We have missed you, errant rover, can you doubt it?

We have a keen suspicion,
You've been on an expedition,
Now we'll listen while you tell us all about it.

First Small Being:

I have just returned, 'tis so,
From that lower region. Oh!
Never roam,
Stay at home,
Or you'll regret it.
I went whizzing down through space,
Till I struck that awful place,
Though I live a million years I'll ne'er forget it.

Chorus:

No, we'll never, never, never, never roam,
And we'll ever, ever, ever stay at home,
For, dear brother, you look crinkled,
And your little brow is wrinkled,
And you seem a trifle flighty in the dome.
'Pon our word we'll never, never, never roam.

Small Being:

Oh, hark, hark, hark!
I've hist'ry to relate,
Don't interrupt, 'tis impolite
Just hold your peace and wait.

Chorus:

We'll hold our peace and wait!

Small Being:

Now, promise to believe
Whatever I may tell,
I am not sure just where I struck,
But judge that it was hell.

Chorus:

Oh, h—e—double l!

Small Being:

Their laws are made by men,
They do not recognize
That law is law and can't be changed,
And governs land and skies.

Chorus:

Those creatures are not wise!

Small Being:

The fruits and grains they grow,
Without exaggeration,
Would feed at least a dozen worlds,
And still there's much starvation.

Chorus:

Oh, what a funny nation!

Small Being:

With pious air they dress,
To hide their native skin,
Their naked hands and face are pure,
Their naked body sin.

Chorus:

Where did that fad begin?

Small Being:

But strangest thing of all,
No matter what their station,
Each has to live to suit the rest,
Or lose his reputation.

Chorus:

Now that's exaggeration!

Small Being:

Their government and mode
Of living are so funny,
Each has to work until he dies,
For bits of stuff called money.

Chorus:

Tut tut, you're lying honey!

Small Being:

The females' comic heads,
Are decked with hair galore,
In braids and curls and rats and puffs
They purchase in a store.

Chorus:

Hush! We can stand no more.

Small Being:

Then feed me yellow wine,
Lay leaves upon my head,
And rock me gently brothers, in
My little willow bed.

Chorus:

Ah, dream thou hast but dreampt,
All things thy lips hath said,
The while we rock you calmly in
Your leafy, willow bed.

Voices from above:

Oh, we are the angels of day and night,
We value wrong, we value right.
We watch the play,
From day to day,
And know the sad are oftimes gay.

We cannot condemn poor human dust,
For lo! it must do as it must.
Those man-made rules,
Are simply tools,
To blind the blind and fool the fools.

(Voices of entire Company except inhabitants of Planet Lyra, who live by the Law and know no code of ethics.)

Company in Chorus:

Yes, yes, our rules
Are merely tools
To blind the blind and fool the fools.
Ha ha! ha ha! ha ha! Tiger!!

CURTAIN.

Accused

I cut my crimson heart in two,
And lay it on the floor,
    And quickly, ere its beating stops,
    I scan its fibre, test its drops
Of blood upon the floor.

I scream aloud, then madly hide
That phantom red and raw,
    That bleeding heart upon the floor,
    And I shall view it never more,
Nor speak of what I saw.

Beautiful Lies

A beautiful lie was told me,
So clear and sweet it rang,
My heart was gay with music,
As though the angels sang.

Ah, beautiful, beautiful, wonderful lies,
Pure as the blue of the azure skies,
Tell me many,
Tell me any
Fanciful, beautiful lies!

A horrible truth was told me,
And I grew sad and old.
'Twas then my soul confided
The truth is cruel and cold.

Ah, beautiful, beautiful, marvelous lies,
Carols of passion and glad surprise.
Sing them clearest
To your dearest,
Glorious, heavenly lies!

A terrible thing was taught me,
By men of sober thought,
That truth alone is noble,
Is what the sad fools taught.

Ah, beautiful, musical, mystical lies,
Launching a soul into Paradise.
Speak them loudly,
Shout them proudly,
Magical, merciful lies!

Turbulence

I sing of the goodness within me,
The holiness pure and warm,
Which pilots my thought and action,
Through blustering, blinding storm.
It cries not its praise from the housetops,
No human will e'er opine
How closely my soul is related
To the Father—the Great Divine.

I sing of the badness within me,
It clatters like April rain,
It grapples with every fibre
Of heart and hand and brain.
It keeps like a thief under cover,
And no human tongue can tell
How closely my soul is related
To the little Red Imps in Hell.

Murdered

Do you belong to the working class?
The throbbing mass?
Then lay your calloused hand in mine,
I'm kin of thine.
Each morn before the light of day
A force within cries, "Slave, obey!
"Arise! arise!
"Ope wide your eyes,
"For know you in Fools' Paradise
"There is no time for play."

Were you enrolled at age of eight,
By some cruel fate?
Then count your childhood years with mine,
I'm kin of thine.
Each day we sob, "How long? how long?"
Oh, is it right or is it wrong?
With heart of lead,
The path we tread,
Each crying out for daily bread.
We have no voice for song.

Ah, have you reckoned those you see
Are gay and free?
That lovely dream was also mine,
I'm kin of thine.
We press along life's thoroughfare,
Concealing well the cross we bear,
We hear a sigh,
We wonder why
A tear should dim such lovely eye,
And wash away a prayer.

Friend, has your sinew turned to bone?
Your heart to stone?
Then press your tired cheek to mine,
I'm kin of thine.
Lay figures all—of crumbling chalk.
Now hark! of coming joys they talk.
Too late, too late!
I've learned to hate
That ruling power men call Fate.
Too late! My ghost doth walk.

A Final Conclusion

What's the use of living,
When living comes so high?
What's the use of dying? One
Must give up all to die.

What's the use of smiling when
A smile is just a stall?
What's the use of kicking when
It doesn't help at all?

What's the use of trying
To tread the moral path?
Can't you see your fellow-men
Are giving you the laugh?
What's the use of aiming
To be a good old scout?
Money lasts a little while,
And then you're down and out.

What's the use of loving
A pair of speaking eyes?
You and I have learned that love's
Sweet melodies are lies.
What's the use of hating,
And doubting all that's said?
Growing cold and sour? Why,
We'd better far be dead.

What's the use of striving with
Some hazy end in view?
Ain't we tried and tried again,
And seen the thing fall through?
What's the use of giving up?
Acknowledging defeat?
Sitting down and saying, "Well,
"This game has got me beat."

What's the use of working like
A motor every day?
What's the use, when we have learned
That working doesn't pay?
What's the use of loafing,
And wasting all one's time?
What's the use of you or me,
Or this sad, sorry rhyme?
Oh hell!
What's the use?

A Great Passion

Dedicated lovingly to Frank—Ann's lawful wedded husband.

'Twas once upon a time,
When Ann and I were young,
Quite clos'ed were our maiden eyes,
Quite lock'ed was our tongue.
We wandered through a park,
And caught the echo, "Madam."
Our eyes then left the grassy ground,
And met a son of Adam.
(At first we thought we had 'em.)

It was not very light,
It was not very dark,
'Twas just the shade to lose a heart
While strolling through a park.
And he was tall and strong,
And we were small and frail.
Ah, I must speak though well you know
I'll tell the same old tale.
(Lest I succeed to fail.)

The summer had its day,
Each day a perfect pearl,
And then we leaned to kiss the cross,
We were a happy girl.
Come Fall we wed the Prince,
Our gallant tall and handsome.
We loved his hand, we loved his hair,
We loved his manner mansome.
(Oh, who will pay our ransom?)

They say that love is blind.
That maxim should be fired.
Our love for him I vow was frought
With insight most inspired.
Oftimes we quite agreed,
His ways were smeared and gory.
He'd flirt with every skirt,
Italian, Turk or Tory.
(Apologies to Florrie.)

And other flaws we found
In this great, stalwart youth,
A sentimental way had he
Of sticking to the truth.
We tried with sombre sighs
Of this strange fault to break him,
And oftentimes we firmly vowed
He'd mend or else we'd shake him.
(Then in our arms we'd take him.)

He kept us hopping some,
We slid from base to base.
We practiced every wily art
To keep him in his place.
Sometimes said we to us,
We surely got a pill!
Now, what's become of him? Well say,
We're clinging to him still.
(And I fear we always will.)

Over Ambitious

My depravity's really fictitious.
But on the Q. T. it's delicious
To see each old dame
Dissecting my game,
'Tis food for the semi-suspicious.

I've Lived

I've lived and lived and lived and lived,
Oh God, the years I've lived!
The lives I've lived, the deaths I've died,
I've honored truth and lied and lied.
And still I live though having died.

As timid child I lived a life
Of toil and tear and work and strife,
And in the night with every breath
I sobbed and moaned and prayed for death.
The morning broke! That child of strife
Then dried its tear and prayed for life.

Time fled. A maiden questing lore
Stood where that child had stood before.
With trembling hand she swung the gate
And gazed upon the face of Fate.
A shrunken, shriveled, wanton face,
The maiden searched but found no trace
Of joy or rest or justice dealt.
She hid her eyes and humbly knelt.

A woman young with azure dream
Next glided down the crafty stream.
A voice within most true and bright
Sung songs of love and life and light,
Tuned melodies that fed and thrilled,
Until one day that voice was stilled.
I knew then something had been killed.

And next upon the shifting scene
Appeared a creature gaunt and lean,
With hollow eye and sunken cheek,
And rigid lips which could not speak,
With tattered soul, and heart grown cold,
I gazed and knew the young was old.

Ah, yes, I've lived and lived and lived.
Oh, God, the years I've lived!
The lives I've lived, the deaths I've died,
Devoid of strength or hope or pride.
And still I live 'mongst deaths I've died.

Mothers! Mothers! Mothers!

Every one must have a mother!
Little sister, little brother,
They are accidents of chance,
But mothers meet us in advance.

Its mothers, mothers everywhere,
Mothers here and mothers there.
Altogether, let us sing—
Mothers! Mothers! Mothers!

Mothers are a funny lot.
Whisper softly, are they not?
Wonder did the good Lord know
Mothers would be so-and-so.

It's mothers now and mothers then,
Mothers why? and mothers when?
What would this world be without
Mothers! Mothers! Mothers!

Mothers tell us what to be,
Plan the route for you and me,
Plan that we shall rule the day,
We, of common butchers' clay.

It's mother slave and mother queen,
'Neath the glass their offsprings seen,
Prove to be but bellied worms,
Like unto their mothers.

Mothers place us on a throne,
Halo o'er our crumbling bone.
Something happens. Crash! We fall!
Not what mothers meant at all.

It's mothers, mothers, fathers' wives,
Proud and sure they spend their lives
Making rag-dolls for the mart!
Mothers! Mothers! Mothers!

Mothers marry us to kings,
Dukes and lords and other things.
But 'tis plain they did not bother
When they chose our earthly father.

Its mothers over all the land,
Mothers, can't you understand
We are filthy rags and bones,
E'en though you're our mothers.

Mothers see us young and fair,
Dimpled cheeks and wavy hair.
Presto chango! Married! Sad!
Soon we're calling hubby "Dad."

We are mothers, such is life,
Marching to the devil's fife,
Harking to his winsome lies.
'Tis the fate of mothers!
Mothers! Mothers! Mothers!

God's Creatures

Sung to a hit-or-miss melody.

This life is a curious proposition,
To live quite spoils my disposition.
If resignation were in my power,
I'd quit complaining from this hour.
I'd only sing of love and duty,
Only chant of God's great beauty.

I've wished to live quite square and straight,
But civilization has turned my pate.

At tender age I'm growing gray,
And my noblest thought is to "hit the hay,"
And then to lay me down to sleep,
And pray the Lord his fools to keep
From off my path when I awake,
And this I ask for goodness sake.

But in the morn if I'm alive,
I have to get me up at five,
And toil all day till half past nine,
A-serving fine and superfine.
I wrap their parcels up so neatly,
Ever smiling—smiling sweetly.

I'd never complain about my job,
It's just the mob—the madding mob.
For the worst of all this damned life's features
Is meeting daily God's dear creatures.
They're worth the same as I, I guess,
In brain and brawn and moneylessness.

But here I state, and state what's true,
I like me more than I like you.

I've tried the game through many channels,
I've dressed in silks and rags and flannels,
But whether I peered from well or steeple,
I've always seen people, people, people!

My eyes are sick, my heart is blue.
Say, what would you do if I were you?
You'd do the very same as I,
Just work and kick and laugh and cry.
You'd hate the mob, still hate to grieve them,
You'd long for peace, still, dread to leave them.

In very truth—lest I'm a liar,
Not one soul knows its own desire.

We've lived so long our brains are muddled,
We've all been lashed, and all been cuddled.

So let us kneel in prayer again,
Let's pray to Gods and pray to men.
Let's pray to sages wise and teachers,
To give us strength to bear God's creatures.

Ah, Bobby Burns it is not fair
To challenge me with such a prayer:
"O, wad some Power the giftie gie us
"To see oursels as ithers see us!"

Answered

Question of Youth:

Oh, why these shackles on my feet?
Why bind me to this task?
I would be free!
Sweet liberty
Is all, aye all, I ask.

Answer of Old Veteran:

Nay, you must wear the iron bands,
Obey by word and act.
Why lad, you know
Long, long ago
The Liberty Bell was cracked.

The Cry of Our Noble Nation

In the line of evolution,
We have long been taught to think,
'Twixt the monad and the human,
Somewhere there's a Missing Link.
Scientists have taken action,
Driven public to distraction,
Gleaning this for satisfaction,
Somewhere there's a Missing Link.

In the line of liquid fluids,
We initiated think,
Twixt cold water and old sherry,
Somewhere there's a Missing Drink.
See, our lips are parched and burning.
We are craving, raving, yearning.
Notwithstanding all our learning,
There is still a Missing Drink.

Though we bacchanalians revel,
And the merry glasses clink,
Quite beyond the dregs we drain them
Searching for that Missing Drink.
Strange on earth we cannot buy us
Liquid stuffs to satisfy us,
We would lie like Ananias
For a sponge wet with that drink.

Pray, be patient, thirsting brother,
Scholars delve with ax and ink.
Scientists have righteous reasons
Why they hunt the Missing Link.
Back in Adam's time they're thinking,
There was revelry and drinking,
And that Link with knowing winking,
Mixed and served that Missing Drink.

Introduce me to that Gink!

Thy Will Be Done

A hymn to my beloved mother.

A barn-yard hen once laid an egg,
And her heart was full of glee.
"I'll hatch," she said, with a joyful smile,
"A chick that's just like me.
"Tee hee," laughed she,
In gladsome glee,
"A chick that's just like me."

The Farmer did not hear her plan,
Or else he did not care,
For He was Master and she was slave.
(Well, it doesn't seem just fair.)
But he didn't beg,
Nor care a peg.
And the hen sat on the egg.

The days wore by, the weeks wore by,
And the chicken came to light.
Then the good hen wore a worried look,
As very well she might.
For the bill was flat,
And the body fat,
And the feet spread like a mat.

But the chick stayed under the mother's wing,
And the Farmer tilled His soil.
But to the rooster the hen complained,
"This isn't according to Hoyle.
"I thought that she
"Would be like me,
"And she isn't the least, you see."

The chicken grew to maidenhood,
Said she, "I am your daughter,
"Still though your feet are always dry,
"My feet cry out for water.
"*As thou art thee,*
"*So I am me,*
"*And he is he, and she is she.*"

The mother hen was sorely grieved.
She couldn't quite get through
Her mother head, her mother heart,
That one and one *are two.*
"Oh, it's a shame!
"But who's to blame?"
And she thought the Farmer's name.

Then spake the rooster, reas'ning well,
"Don't be so democratic,
"Say—not my will but Thine be done!
"Pray, be more diplomatic.
"For we must eat
"Our corn and wheat
"And the Farmer throws it at our feet."

The rooster was a wise old bird,
So he argued to the hen,
"Just as it is with fish or fowl,
"Just so it is with men.
"The babe might be
"Quite fair to see,
"Still not like either he or she!"

(And the Farmer laughed, "Tee hee!")

The City

The City—
The grimy, the mud-stained blot,
The prosperous centre of flourishing rot.
What is it, man? What is it not?
The City?

The City—
The red devil's hunting ground,
He comes to the call of the city's sound,
And merrily dances in and round,
The City!

The City—
We hear the historians tell
That blood was shed and heroes fell
To save a spot more cruel than hell,
The City!

The City—
The home of the lean, white slave,
Who sees his sky through an open grave,
The creature Lord Christ died to save.
'Tis pity!

The City—
Where souls are slain at birth,
Where mockery rings in place of mirth,
Ah think, come speak, what is its worth?
The City!

The City—
The monster it squats in the mud,
Awaiting its prey and athirsting for blood.
Aye, thirsting and whining for human blood.
The City!

The City—
The howling, the thrice damned blot,
The flourishing pasture of murderous rot.
What is it, man? What is it not?
The City!

The Naked Body of Me

Come, poor little hated body of me,
Let us try,
You and I,
To phathom a curious mystery,
Mayhap 'tis but a lie.

Come, poor little prisoned mite of clay,
They torture so,
I must know
Just what they mean by all they say.
Are you a thing so low?

I see you glistening fair and white,
Body of me,
Lithe and free.
The gods might envy mine eyes the sight,
The dazzling sight of thee.

Your delicate tints, your graces grand,
And fair outline,
Oh, body mine!
'Tis the work of a master artist's hand,
None else could build so fine.

Your saintly head and bosom fair,
Your finger tips,
Your curving hips,
Would tongue condemn, oh would it dare
Defile such lovely lips?

I see the daisies in the grove,
The laughing trees,
The honey bees,
All dressed in garb by nature wove.
Ah, would I were as these!

Come, scorned little naked body of me,
Let us smile
Our little while,
And know that thou art fair to see,
And thought alone is vile.

Compendium

So singeth the soul of my little white God,
With halo of smoke ascending,
With eye of fire, and heart of gold,
And spirit comprehending.
A God well worth defending.

Ye heathen with gods who would barter your souls,
Ye are drunk, ye are dazed, ye are lying.
Wouldst thou reject a maker of songs
For Gods who damn while spying?
Think quick, your hour is flying!

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